

prior Amendment clearly and expressly stated that Claims 10, 14, 16 and 21 each recite a feature which would not be obvious in view of VEB Inducal, and discussed the reasons why this feature is not obvious in view of VEB Inducal.

Summary

Summarizing, the PTO Communication of May 21, 2002 asserts on three separate grounds that Applicants' prior Amendment filed February 22, 2002 is not fully responsive to the prior Office Action mailed October 23, 2001. However, for reasons set forth above, Applicants respectfully submit that each of these assertions is without merit, and that Applicants' prior Amendment is in fact fully and properly responsive to the prior Office Action as to each of the three points in question. Applicants therefore respectfully submit that Applicants' prior Amendment filed February 22, 2002 is in fact complete, and request that the Examiner proceed to reconsider the merits of the present application in view of the Amendment filed February 22, 2002.

Courtesy Note Regarding IDS

As a courtesy, Applicants direct the attention of the Examiner to the fact that an Information Disclosure Statement was filed in the PTO by Express Mail on April 18, 2002. Applicants assume that this IDS has already reached the desk of the Examiner. Nevertheless, in order to ensure that this latest IDS is considered prior to issuance of the next PTO Communication on the merits, Applicants are giving the Examiner courtesy notice here of the fact that the IDS has been filed.

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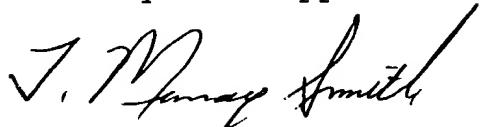
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Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, further and favorable consideration of the present application is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,
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Enclosures: Acknowledgment Post Card